

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals Upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

NAPOLÉON'S HEALTH—CRITICAL POSITION OF FRANCE AND OF EUROPE.

From the N. Y. Herald.

The reports circulated in Paris and London relative to the actual condition of the health of Napoleon, and transmitted to us by the Atlantic cable, are contradictory. His Majesty presided at the Council of Ministers held at St. Cloud, but postponed his visit to Paris. One despatch says his health is "improved," another intimates that he was not seriously ill at any time, whilst a third informs us that he is "much improved" in condition. That he is, indeed, is however, certain. It is said, indeed, that his system is just now in a state of "stagnation" of the vital force rather than one of convalescence.

The Emperor of France is in his sixty-second year. Although this is not an age that suggests the close of a career where there is robust health, or where life has been passed with temperate regard to the requirements of nature, it is a great age at which to bear severe disease. Age is so important a point in view of disease that many maladies, always curable in the prime of life, are always fatal at sixty. Napoleon was, perhaps, never richly endowed with vital force, and the store he had been sadly encroached upon by a life that in many vicissitudes has naturally yielded much to the temptations of the senses; nerve and brain also have been somewhat over-taxed. In later years, and now, with less elasticity than in his youth, a majority of men have at his age, he finds a system torn with the oft-repeated agonies of a disease certainly incurable and apparently well nigh beyond all control. His position is very grave. Napoleon apparently refuses longer to be responsible for his Majesty's condition. Ricord has been called, and it is reported also that advice has been sought among the great doctors of Germany. Finally, however, there is a limit to the utmost that science can do in keeping our physical machinery in operation; and we may fairly infer, from this sudden summoning of all advice that may have a possibility—the least chance—in it, that his Majesty's condition is such that the Emperor's faculties that limit. We see also that the Emperor is kept within call. There are critical moments in the history of dynasties when all depends upon presence at the capital; and it is apparently recognized at the Tuileries that one of these may be near. If Napoleon should die with Eugénie at Constantinople some one else might be regent, and in that contingency the chances of the Prince Imperial ever to come to the throne would be smaller even than they are.

Napoleon's life is at this moment the most important of any in Europe, for his death, and his claims, are the subject of the present. We have seen a Car pass away and his place taken almost without the consciousness of his subject empire. If Prussia should change rulers it would be only a change of place for the national portraits. Other changes would be most apparent in the almanac of Gotha. All these nations accept the fact of a reigning dynasty; France does not; but her eternal protest is that she will tolerate no dynasty; that she is not the property of any family; that she cannot be degraded to an heirloom, but is forever the mistress of her own destiny. If she accepted the empire, it was with Louis Napoleon as Emperor, and his very recognition of her right to choose, while it indicated on his part a true perception of the only basis of a throne in France, will be held as committing even him to her right to choose again. France cannot be bound by any law, by any constitution or agreement written on paper or cut in brass; neither can her own sons ever be for an hour dependent upon an army to sustain any system, order, or idea that is once repudiated by the national impulse. She is the enfant terrible of nations. She will hurt or hurt thought anywhere, and, whether in word or act, will recognize no conventionalities. She has her own sovereignty and absolute will. How can a dynasty be made to stand in the presence of such a people? No man can count upon the life of the Emperor for a day; no man can count upon the permanence of the present order in France for a day beyond his death, and with that order gone what hurly-burly will not follow? Napoleon has just disturbed Germany very greatly by his propositions to give greater freedom to France. How much more, then, would Germany be disturbed with the French people suddenly taking to themselves all the freedom that others covet? With a tumult in France, how the present organization in Spain would melt away? There is no house in Europe in such order that it might defy the chances of this possible crisis.

There is one peculiar hope for order in France and Europe, and that is in Prince Napoleon. When France last had the opportunity to freely express her own will, the republic was set up, Louis Napoleon, acting on the not unreasonable assumption that the republic was tending to a reign of anarchy, gratified his personal ambition by pulling it the other way, and the republic, instead of becoming a chaos and a butchery, as he pretended to fear, became the empire. His hope has been that the power thus gained would be passed down to his son. The conflict in France, therefore, will be whether the nation will yield to that one man's idea or insist upon its own. Will not the nation instinctively revert to the idea of the republic and repudiate the claims of a possible tyrant in his minority? All the indications are that France is eager to try again the solution of that problem from the consideration of which she was rudely thrust away by the "2d of December." On the other hand, many interests, no doubt, will endeavor their utmost to sustain the claim of the Prince Imperial, and in this conflict there is the highest probability that Prince Napoleon may stand forth as the grand compromise candidate, uniting in his own person the best that might be claimed, equally by those favoring the republic and the dynasty. For he is the best Bonaparte of them all. And if such a nation, in this age, accepts the dynastic idea, it will only be in the rare case where the successor may be an intelligent and even able man. He is also a republican by education and apparently by natural taste, and his recent declarations in favor of liberalism are so much in keeping with his whole career that they are not accused of even an electing insincerity. Europe may be congratulated upon the hope that the presence of this man in France affords her.

DOMINION NOT POWER.

From the N. Y. Tribune. Another speech by the Canadian Governor-General, reported to us from New Brunswick, is noteworthy as reaffirming some of the most interesting of the positions taken by him at Quebec, and as containing a sagacious and friendly reference to the United States. We speak of Governor Sir John Young as being permanent and intellect qualified to make

known to the people of the Dominion the slightest shade of that parental indifference as to the selfish possession of her colonies which is now becoming constitutional with the mother country. The parent is old, and prosperous, and comfortable, has happily outlived the fallacy that territorial obesity is main strength, and is awake to the need of giving freedom to her members, and suffering her children to have the fair play of their instincts and faculties. The colonial children have attained a majority, the mother contemplates their union among themselves, and even hears without great concern a proposition that some of them shall be married off her hands. We think Sir John Young has said something to this effect, and said it with so British an air that we doubt not he has reflected Mr. Gladstone's sentiments in spirit, if not in letter. Governor Sir John again says that, though every fault in the world, down to the misrecognition of a shoddy nomenclature, is laid at the door of confederation, yet is the fact of union indispensable to the well-being of the American colonies. The Dominion has a career before it which it may safely and honorably pursue, not only undisturbed, but, he also believes, "with the complete good-will of the people of the United States." Sir John may securely calculate upon the American disposition to tolerate the largest liberty of choice in such matters as colonial dominion. We have States enough, to be sure. The continent is wide enough in all conscience. The Hudson Bay Territory, down to the most remote verge, is enough to permit a free field to adventurous nationalities which seek to build upon the foundations of their enterprise a history and economy of their own.

Canadian Confederation is one thing; Australian Union is another. What was foreshadowed in our correspondence a month ago is verified by the appearance in England of an independent call for a conference in London of duly appointed representatives from all the Australasian colonies of England. To obtain colonial representation in Parliament, to place the more advanced of the colonies on a diplomatic footing, to administer colonial affairs by a board, are some of the motions for reform which are hinted in advance for the consideration of such an assembly. The general complaint of the colonists is that the mother country recognizes "no responsibility for their welfare or safety, nor any obligation to help them, even in circumstances of great danger and pressing need." Though the home side of the question will hardly admit this statement of fact, we conceive that the complaint of the Australians is in the natural course of events just what it should be. Britain having purchased the motherly office of bringing up all her territorial children by hand, has no longer any anxious care for their destiny. They are big enough to protect themselves; they are very far off. After a large experience of possessing and losing, after having spent millions of money on unrighteous wars, the historic dame has reached the generous conclusion that the greatest of national riches are to be found in the magnanimity of letting well alone. Without making a vain effort to keep her wonderful possessions in an imperial grasp, she is content to allow them the chance to grow just as she will. This is not only the best, but it is a matter of necessity. Australia is too populous and prosperous to be longer considered a floating appendage of the British empire thousands of miles away. At the same time it is one of the phenomena of the age that what was formerly a matter of revolution is now only one of evolution. States are changing their relations by a law of peaceful growth, and governments are almost guilty of Christian renunciation with a view of acquiring such a thing as moral power over their possessions.

Can we conceive we are more interested in seeing other nations well-governed by themselves than by us. It will save the United States a world of trouble if some crying States will comfortably and freely keep their identities, and leave us to ours unmolested. Great nations stand responsible for aid and comfort to their weaker relations, and can scarcely escape the task of turning good Samaritan, and nursing some infirm nationality; but if a State can keep its feet, and walk and work for itself, by all means let it do so. Our interest is in seeing the world well self-governed. We have something at stake in that great, above and beyond our national aggrandizement, and count no addition of territory a gain that comes with self-seeking on our part. Let our neighbors govern themselves liberally and ably, and they will have gone far to deserve our welcome whenever they shall apply for annexation, and our respect if they shall not. We think we discover a reciprocity of tone in this statement of the position of the United States and that uttered by Sir John Young on the part of England. It is a proof that both countries have grown too great to fear.

THE MINING HORROR.

From the N. Y. World. The Avondale catastrophe exceeds in horror any which we have ever been called upon to record. Nothing more baleful than the doom of the two hundred dead miners found heaped upon each other, with blood upon their lips, their hands clenched in death agony, and their glassy eyes unclosed, has been known among mankind. Greater numbers have perished by the stroke of calamity; in earthquake, storm, or battle; but all other forms of death seem appalling when compared with that which finally released the miners from an extremity of which it is impossible to think without a shudder. The horrors of the Black Hole of Calcutta; of the mountain cave in which the fugitive Algerians took refuge and were suffocated with smoke by order of the ferocious St. Arnaud; of the burning cathedral in a South American city, in which nearly the entire concourse of worshippers were destroyed, seem to lose something of their awfulness in the contrast. Two hundred men, packed in with night, stifled with slowly gathering vapors, groping through black, swirling, and falling at length at the closed gate of their mephitic prison-house, a writhing mass of terror and despair, constitute a picture from the contemplation of which we shrink appalled as we do from the ghastly and hideous images which Dante tells us that he saw in Malebolge.

It is all over now. The dead men rest from their labors, and like those who perish in bed or battle or by any of the strokes of fate, their works will follow them. No comments will be summoned them again to life or mitigate the anguish of the bereaved wives and children who clustered about the mouth of the pit, and whose pain must have been only less than that of the victims who were slowly suffocating beneath their feet. Nor have we a very sanguine hope that any preachment from this appalling text will do much to avert future disasters of the sort. The recklessness of human life in this country has grown into a proverb. Here was a cavern in which hundreds of men daily trusted their lives, their works will follow them. No comments will be summoned them again to life or mitigate the anguish of the bereaved wives and children who clustered about the mouth of the pit, and whose pain must have been only less than that of the victims who were slowly suffocating beneath their feet. 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